

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A single- or multi-layered synthetic-based anti-microbial food casing comprising one or more layers, wherein the layer or at least one of the layers comprises an antimicrobially active amount of at least one metal salt and said antimicrobial properties are imparted to the food casing by said metal salt alone.

2. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the metal salt comprises ions of silver, copper, zinc and/or other metal ions having antimicrobial activity.

3. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing comprises polyamide and/or copolyamide.

4. (Currently Amended) The food casing as claimed in claim ~~[[1]]~~ 3, wherein the (co)polyamide comprises an aliphatic (co)polyamide.

5. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 4, wherein the aliphatic (co)polyamide is blended with at least one partially aromatic (co)polyamide.

6. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 5, wherein the fraction of the at least one partially aromatic (co)polyamide is no greater than 50% by weight, based on the total weight of all (co)polyamides.

7. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fraction of metal salt(s) in the single-layered casing, or in a layer of the multi-layered casing, is 0.005 to 4.0% by weight, based on the total weight of the casing or of the relevant layer in the casing.

8. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fraction of metal ions is 0.0025 to 2% by weight, based on the total weight of the casing or of the relevant layer of the casing.

9. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is multi-layered and at least the outer layer comprises at least one antibacterially active metal salt.

10. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is tubular.

11. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is unstretched.

12. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is biaxially stretched.

13. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is multi-layered and comprises layers based on polyolefins, polyesters, polyvinylidene chloride, polyethylene-co-vinyl acetate and/or polyethylene-co-methyl methacrylate.

14. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 13, wherein said food casing has no more than 5 layers.

15. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 13, wherein said food casing has a symmetrical structure.

16. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 13, wherein said food casing has an asymmetrical structure.

17. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is presoaked ready-to-stuff.

18. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing has a wall thickness of 15 to 150 μm .

19. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing has a diameter of about 20 to 200 mm.

20. (Previously Presented) A method for producing a food casing as claimed in claim 1, which comprises mixing a master batch which comprises about 5 to 40% by weight of at least one antimicrobially active metal salt with the remaining constituents of the casing or the relevant layer of the casing and then extruding or coextruding the mixture.

21. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the master batch comprises as support material a polyolefin.

22. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 21, wherein said polyolefin comprises polyethylene, a polypropylene, a copolymer having ethylene and propylene units, an ethylene/(C₄-C₈) α -olefin copolymer, a propylene/(C₄-C₈) α -olefin copolymer, or an ethylene/propylene/(C₄-C₈) α -olefin copolymer, or a polyamide.

23. (New) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing has not been subjected to an anti-microbial after-treatment and said food casing exhibits a bacteriostatic activity of greater than 1.9.

24. (New) The food casing as claimed in claim 23, wherein said metal salt is present in an amount ranging from about 0.005 to 2.0% by weight, based on the weight of the layer.